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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000218

SIPDIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/09/14

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [CE](#) [MV](#)

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 019 (02/09/04)

Classified by Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead for reasons 1.5  
(b) and (d).

CONTENTS: ELECTION MONITORING  
- ATTACK ON CHRISTIAN NGO  
- PROPOSED IRF VISIT  
- STRIKES

#### ELECTION MONITORING

1. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: You will see our front-channel report re the calling of elections on April 2. As with previous elections in Sri Lanka, we are looking into the options of assisting election monitoring. During the December 2001 parliamentary elections, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) received Department funds for election work, then sub-contracted the monitoring work to two local NGOs (PAFFREL and CPA). In order effectively to solicit monitoring proposals from NDI and other organizations, such as the International Republican Institute, we need to know how much funding is available from the Department. Can someone please check with DRL to see if that office can provide funds for the April elections? In order to implement and get monitors on the ground, we need an answer, including dollar amount, before the end of this week (February 13). AID will also be contributing to the overall funding. (POL/AID)

#### ATTACK ON CHRISTIAN NGO

2. (U) FYI. On February 8, an office for the Christian NGO, World Vision, was damaged in a fire attack. No one was injured in the incident, which took place some 20 miles north of the north-central cultural city of Anuradhapura. Contacts have told us the police arrested, and then released, one individual (there are reports that maybe more than one individual was arrested and then released). This is the third time in three months that a World Vision office was attacked. The other two attacks occurred at sites in and around Colombo. See Colombo 192 for the most recent update on religious freedom issues. (POL)

#### IRF VISIT

3. (SBU) FYI. Despite our best efforts to turn off a proposed visit by Will Inboden, Special Adviser for IRF, slated for late February, Mission just received another email from Inboden. As you will see in our February 9 email reply, we continue to stress that his proposed February 26-27 visit does not come at a good time. The Ambassador, along with most of the country team, will be in the Maldives for meetings. POL, which will be down to one person that time frame, will be managing SA/RA Schlosser's visit, which is slated for 2/25-28. We communicated to Inboden that we hope to be able to host him in Sri Lanka at a later point in time because we think an IRF visit is important. Pls make this point, too. (POL)

#### STRIKES

4. (C) FYI. Just want to flag that Sri Lanka has been plagued by a series of recent strikes. Many observers feel that these strikes have contributed to a general perception that the PM's government, after months without a resolution to the cohabitation crisis, is having some troubles. Whether this perception plays much into the coming election campaign is unclear. Unions connected with the extremist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party and the SLFP are behind all three of the recent strikes by healthcare, agriculture, and railway workers. (POL/ECON)

LUNSTEAD